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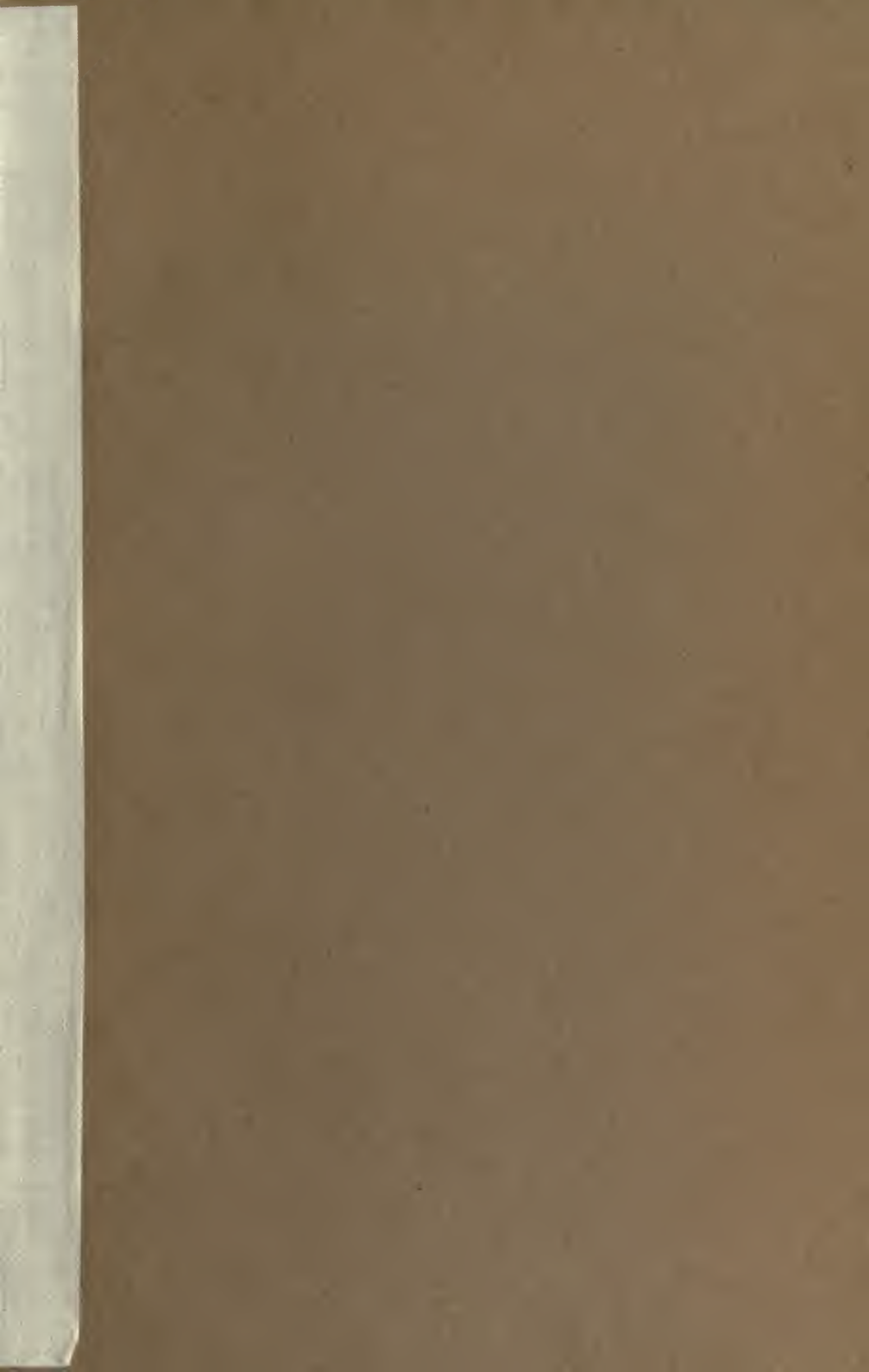
CATHOLIC COMMISSIONER FOR INDIAN MISSIONS



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OF THE

Catholic Commissioner

FOR

INDIAN MISSIONS,

TO

The Catholics of the United States.

BALTIMORE:
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1874.

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OFFICE OF THE CATHOLIC COMMISSIONER,
FOR INDIAN MISSIONS,

WASHINGTON, D. C., *February, 1874.*

~~RE. REV. AND DEAR SIR:~~ *Madam*

The following letter of the Most Reverend Archbishop of Baltimore, is my authority for addressing you in behalf of our Catholic Indian Missions:

Archdiocese of }
Baltimore. } BALTIMORE, *January 2d, 1874.*

*To the Honorable the
Secretary of the Interior,
Washington, D. C.*

SIR:—The Catholic Bishops of the United States who have Indian Missions within the limits of their Dioceses, have requested me to appoint a responsible person residing in Washington as their representative, near the Department having charge of these matters.

They are not able to leave their Dioceses to come to Washington to explain the great injustice, which is often done towards the missions, (which have been for so many years under their care,) on account as they believe, of erroneous information sent to the Department, and they feel that it would be a great advantage to them and agreeable to the Department, if some one fully acquainted with the whole matter, should take charge of the interests of the old Catholic Missions amongst the Indians.

In accordance with their request, and acting in their name, I have appointed General Charles Ewing, of Washington, to act as Commissioner on the part of the Catholic Bishops for this purpose, as one every way fitted for the position, and I am confident personally acceptable to yourself; and as such, I respectfully recommend him to your kind attention.

I have the honor to be,

Very truly, your ob't serv't,

✠ J. ROOSEVELT BAYLEY,

Archbishop of Baltimore.

As the office of the Catholic Commissioner is charged with the protection and furtherance of the temporal and spiritual interests of our Catholic Indian Missions, so far as either may be affected by the administration of Indian affairs at this Capital, I trust that a brief statement of the origin and purposes of the office will be of interest to you, and that it will receive at your hands the attention and help that it needs.

Such an office as the one just organized, if it has not been at all times necessary for the most successful prosecution of our missionary labors among the Indians, would certainly for the past fifty years have been to them a most valuable auxiliary. But whatever it might have been in the past, there is no question but that its existence, since 1870, has been absolutely necessary, not only for the prosperity of our Missions, but in fact to save them from utter ruin. And when I remind you that we have, among the Indians, more than forty Mission Houses, with over three hundred stations, at which full 100,000 Indians are often visited and receive from our missionaries religious instruction and the sacraments of the Church; that the Government Agents, at the majority of these

Agencies are now using all of their power to counteract the labors of our Priests in their efforts to convert and control the Indians, and at many stations have forbidden and prevented religious instruction and the administration of the sacraments; and that this is due chiefly to our want of proper organization under the Indian Policy of the Government, which was intended to strengthen and make *all* Missions more efficient; you will perceive that the object of this office, in the correction of the injuries that have been inflicted on our Missions and our Catholic Indians, and their protection against the dangers that threaten them, involves the performance of a great work that is entitled to the sympathy and support of the Catholics of the United States.

It is strange that this state of affairs should grow out of the wise and humane Indian Policy of the President, which would, if properly administered by the men to whom its development was entrusted, and earnestly and honestly seconded by the Christian Churches of the United States, bring real and lasting peace and prosperity to the Indians, and give to their Missions more power than any Christian Church has had in modern times in its efforts to evangelize heathen nations. But unfortunately, the policy has not been properly developed, and a fair and honest consideration has not been given to the rights of our Church under it, and we are therefore in danger of being forced to abandon four-fifths of our Missions by the very policy that should have increased their number. This does not appear possible under our Government, but it is nevertheless a fact, that a statement of the manner in which our Indians are governed, and the result of the enforcement of this new executive rule will make perfectly plain.

Of all the Indian tribes that are found within the territorial limits of the United States, there are but two or three inconsiderable nations that have any form of government of their own creation, or who take any part in the administration of their tribal affairs. All other tribes have chiefs and headmen, who sometimes lead their people, but cannot enforce obedience to their commands. They are the children of nature and take from her open hands what she offers, knowing no rights of property in the individual, beyond the most common articles and things of life. They have no artificial measure of values, or mode of transferring titles and, consequently have no commerce, beyond what is sustained between contiguous tribes, by the barter of animals and the products of the chase. Practically, the individuals of a nation stand upon the same plane, and all have an abundance of food and clothing, or are in want of either or both, as the season chances to be prolific or barren. They are content if the wants or fancies of the day are gratified, and without the power, if they have the wish, to provide for more than the rudest necessities of life, and therefore do not wisely provide from the abundance of to-day for the possible deficiencies of to-morrow, but depend too much upon the season to supply their wants. They are consequently often in want, and disposed to lean upon any power that will have a provident care of them.

Such a people coming in contact with the intelligent and shrewd, fearless and sometimes unscrupulous pioneers of our advance settlements, feel themselves, and they are in fact powerless—even for self-preservation; and surrounded on every side by the silent and unseen power that urges forward and protects the race that, their tradition tells them, has pushed their people, when they were numerous and warlike, back from their homes in the East to their reservations on the prairies

and in the mountains of the far West, they know that it is useless to contend against it, and they therefore lean upon this power which alone can protect them. Consequently, the General Government can and does exercise almost unlimited control over them and their property.

For the protection of these people and the peace of its territories, the United States has been forced to take control of the affairs of each tribe; not simply in political matters, as it does over citizens in our western territories, but in all things in which it is thought possible to improve the condition of the Indians. The only participation ever allowed them in the management of their public affairs, was in the negotiation of Treaties with the United States, but this right has recently been taken from them, and their laws are now arbitrarily made by the Federal Government and executed by its Agents—the Indians having no voice or vote, holding no offices of trust or authority. They are regarded as children—wards of the United States—who must be governed and directed, so far as it is possible, in all matters of life, until they ripen into civilized men. Under certain conditions, it provides for them food, clothing, medicines and medical care, farming implements, houses, churches, school houses, schools, &c., &c. It assumes and exercises the right to provide for nearly all their wants, and consequently controls their minds and bodies as any power can control a people that is so dependent upon it.

This government of the Indians or the administration of Indian affairs, is conducted for the President of the United States by the Department of the Interior, through Indian Agents or Governors, who reside with the Indians, and employ doctors, school-teachers, farmers, carpenters and others, to assist them in the care and civilization of the Indians; and to these Agents or Governors, the Indian must look for the

protection of his life and property, and for the food, clothing and other gifts which he may from time to time receive from the United States. Indeed, so absolute is the power of the Agent, that the Indian cannot leave his reservation to lay in the winter supply of meat for his wife and children, without first obtaining a written permit from his Agent.

If they disregard the commands of their Agent, and cannot be induced by the gratuitous offers of clothing, rations and other annuities, to reside upon the reservation fixed for them, then they are forced into subjection by the military arm of the United States; and they know full well how hard that arm can strike, for they have felt it often.

The Indian is not controlled, as I have said, only in such matters as we are. He cannot fix his place of habitation and follow with full liberty the pursuits of the life he may choose. • He is forced to live within prescribed limits. His surplus wealth of lands is converted into money by this ruling power, the income from which it expends in its own discretion for his benefit. It determines the kind and quality of food and clothing each shall have out of the common fund, and, if it see fit, deprives the disobedient and unruly of their share. If he is poor and in want, it gives him food and medicine. It is a strong, unyielding power that has imposed itself upon him; from whose judgment there is no appeal; that commands what it sees fit, and enforces obedience to its command.

When he possessed the whole country, the Indian could find in its varied natural products the means of satisfying all of his wants; and his savage nature made it absolutely necessary for his life that he should have the free range of vast districts of country; and consequently when he comes, with his habits, to be confined to narrow limits, he is poor and dependent. Except what he may gain by gathering

wild fruits and grains, or in the poor harvest that he reaps from his rude tillage of a few fields, and what he is able to lay up from the chase or from the chance increase of his untended herds, he must depend for all else upon the government the United States has given him.

Previous to 1870, the Indian Agents, through whom the United States exercised its extended power over the Indians, expended the proceeds of the Indian's funds, or distributed its large annuities, were for a time appointed from among the friends of the existing Administration, to whom these appointments were the rewards for political work. After a time it was found that through the dishonesty of their Agents, the Indians received but a small per cent. of the money or other annuities sent out to them, when the civilians were set aside, and officers of the army were placed in charge of the agencies, and continued to administer the laws and distribute the annuities on all of the Indian Reservations until 1870. At this time, President Grant being satisfied that *money* and *force* could not bring the Indian to recognize and obey any fixed law or order, determined to call upon the Christian Churches of the United States to help him in caring for the Indians, by uniting the Christian influence of the Missions to the influence of the Government, under what is now known as his Indian Peace Policy.

This policy, as announced by the President, gives to each Church the designation of the Agent for those Indians among whom it had in 1870, an established Mission and christianized Indians; and each Agent, in all his work, in the exercise of all his vast powers, is expected and required to work in harmony with and for the advancement of the Indian Missions *of the Church by which he was designated*; and if he, or any one of his employees shall fail in this, his Church

has the authority, and in fact it becomes its duty, to cause his removal, and substitute for him a man who will conduct the civil affairs of his agency in harmony with the labors of the missionaries.

The Assistant Secretary of the Interior says, that "the new policy contemplates the moral and religious culture of the Indians, and it is not enough that agents are willing to tolerate missionary work among their people; they should be men who can and will render efficient aid themselves in the work and cordially acquiesce in all proper missionary appliances;" and this action of the churches is called by the Assistant Secretary, the "missionary branch" of the present policy of the Government. And the Board of Indian Commissioners in their official report, state that the agents and employees should be honest Christian men and women, who will make successful missionaries, and who, while pursuing their avocations in a faithful manner, will, by precept and example, preach christianity and morality.

It is also understood, under the policy, says the same authority, that when a school is opened, it is for the purpose of imparting to the pupils a knowledge of christianity, as well as the ordinary rudiments of education.

It is, briefly, the intention of the administration to make the effort to evangelize and christianize the Indians, and to do so through the religious societies of the country, which are made a "missionary branch" of the Government for that particular purpose.

In inaugurating this policy, President Grant said that he would give "all the agencies to such religious denominations as had heretofore established missionaries among the Indians," *i. e.*, to those churches that had been first in the field and were actually at work in each Indian tribe, at the time he promulgated his policy.

So understood, the President's policy is humane, philanthropic and christian, as it intends to protect and help the Missions indiscriminately, without interfering with the freedom of any of the churches or the liberty of conscience of the individual.

But the policy is not carried out according to its spirit and letter. Contrary to the expressed intention of the President, the appointment of more than thirty agents which should have been given to the Catholic Church, because it was the first and only successful missionary among the Indians of these agencies, were given to favorite Protestant Churches, by whom they are still held despite the protests of the Indians and of our Church. Missions that have been for hundreds of years Catholic, and Indians to the number of 80,000, who profess the Catholic faith, have been given to the charge of different denominations of Protestants; and this, in direct violation of the unquestioned right of all Christians, who live under our constitution, to perfect freedom in the worship of Almighty God.

Many of the Indian tribes have, in the possession of the Government, large sums of money, the proceeds of the sale of their lands, the interest upon which is, in part, devoted to the education of their children; and for other tribes, appropriations are yearly made for the same purpose, for, in the education of the child, is found the greatest promise of the final adoption by the Indians of the pursuits of civilized men. As religion, under the present policy, or indeed under any conditions, must be the foundation of education, it becomes the duty of the Government, in its character of guardian, to see that the schools which it establishes with this trust fund are supplied with teachers who will educate the children in the faith of their parents.

But, unfortunately, this plain duty is not fulfilled. The honest purpose of the President has been turned aside, and our Catholic Indians have had their school funds given for the support of schools taught by Protestant teachers, who are instructed to teach Indian children religious doctrines antagonistic to the faith of their parents. The Indians have protested against this unjust expenditure of their school fund and this attempt, through their own schools, to pervert the faith of their children. They have declared again and again that they were Catholic, and begged for their Priests and Catholic teachers. Numbers of such protests and petitions have reached the Indian Bureau, but so far only one has secured the desired object, and this through the exertions of this office.

This condition of affairs, it is plain, places our Missions in great danger, and threatens irreparable harm to the Catholic Indians. The Bishops, in whose dioceses these Indians are located, felt it their duty to spare no efforts to rescue them from their present condition and protect them against the dangers that threaten in the future. But knowing from past experience that individual efforts would never produce the desired effect, they have agreed to unite, and, trusting in the good wishes and the cordial coöperation of the whole American Hierarchy, have appointed a commissioner to be their representative at Washington, and there to attend to the interests of their Indian Missions, and of their Indians, in their relations with the Government.

In doing this they have done only what the Government expected them to do, and what it had been for some time anxious they should do. The nature of the present Indian policy requires large and correct information in Indian Mission matters, to enable the Administration to deal fairly and

justly towards all churches ; and this information in regard to Catholic Indians, before the existence of this office, the authorities were at a loss how or where to get, and, in fact, there was no source from which they could get it.

The Protestant churches of the United States have their Boards of Missions, which are their representatives and agents, who speak and act in their names, secure unity of action in the management of their affairs, and, keeping constantly informed as to their means and wants, direct their action. Whenever the Government wants any information from one of them, the Board is prepared to give it. Is there any advantage of any kind offering, the Board is there waiting and ready to act. Is the influence of friends needed for any object of interest to their Missions, the Board knows where to go for it. d

Our COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE has a like object. It is the representative and the agent of the whole Catholic Missionary Church among the Indians. It will speak and act officially in its name and behalf. Keeping itself fully informed as to the condition, wants and means of its Missions, it will always be prepared to argue and plead for justice in their behalf, and give them timely direction. By attention and care it will endeavor to lose no opportunity of serving the Indian Missions, and, by a daily and harmonious communication with the reverend clergy and the numerous benevolent societies under their direction, it will be enabled to know where to find friends and means when they are needed.

To insure the success of this Office in the work that is before it, we must have the active sympathy and charitable help of the Catholics of the United States. Their Christian aid given to defend and secure the religious liberty of the Indian, like all charity, will at least be bread cast upon the waters

and a little reflection will show that it may in fact be the defense of our own right to worship Almighty God, and to educate our children to know and worship Him, free from all control or interference on the part of any secular power ; for the *cause* of the troubles that have come upon our Indian Missions, is *the disregard, the practical denial, of the great principle of religious liberty*, that Catholics first proclaimed, and alone maintained on this continent, until it won advocates and finally became a part of our National Constitution. It is now first attacked in the administration of Indian affairs, and it is certainly our duty to come to the defense of our Catholic brethren of the plains, and the maintenance of the principles handed down to us by our brethren who are gone.

I am, very respectfully,

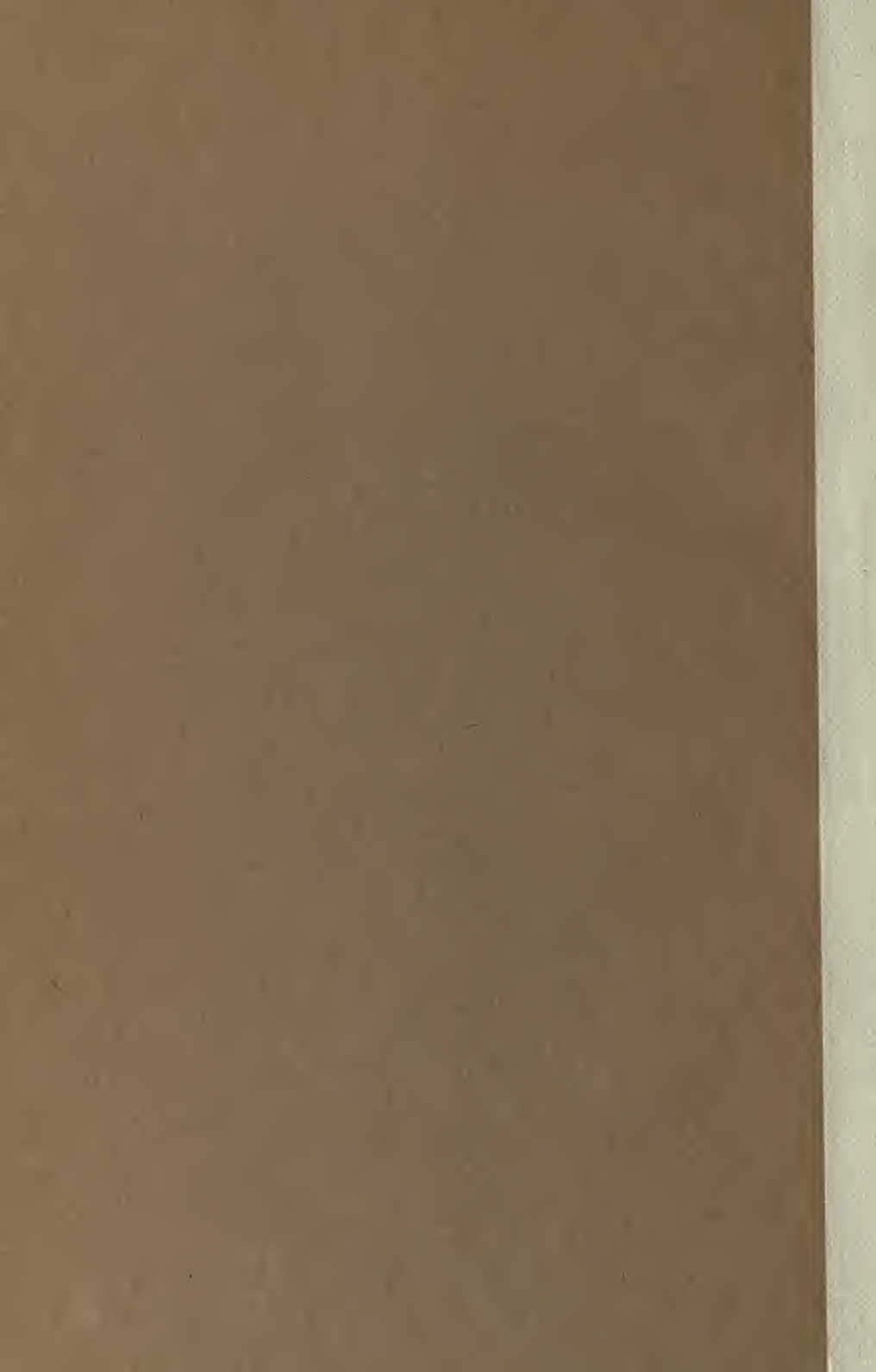
Your obedient servant,

CHARLES EWING,

Catholic Commissioner

for Indian Missions.





Gaylord
PAMPHLET BINDER
Syracuse, N. Y.
Stockton, Calif.

